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Betraying Navy—and Country

A former officer and his son are charged with spying

John A. (Johnny) Walker seemed to be a good ole boy, given to girls, guns and gadgets, not politics. A career Navy man who retired as a chief warrant officer in 1976, Walker, 47, worked as a private detective in Norfolk, Va., dated a policewoman and loved to fly around in his single-engine plane. His three private-investigation firms supplied security services to companies as well as run-of-the-mill snooping for individual clients. But on a rural Maryland road one night last week, FBI agents caught Walker apparently pursuing another one of his businesses: supplying U.S. military secrets to the Soviet Union.

Authorities believe Walker was a Soviet spy for 17 years, trading in top-secret naval communications. As the magnitude of his betrayal unfolded last week, intelligence officials speculated that Walker's espionage may rank with the most damaging in U.S. history. If the charges against Walker prove true, said Admiral Elmo Zumwalt Jr., former Chief of Naval Operations, "this would represent a breach of security as serious as any I can recall."

FBI agents acting on a tip, reportedly from Walker's former wife, were tailing him last Sunday near Poolesville, Md., some 20 miles northwest of Washington, when he stopped his car to toss a bag of trash beside a tree. Mixed with the rubbish were more than 120 classified documents dealing with the movements of Soviet ships in the Mediterranean. When the agents arrested Walker early the next morning, the FBI said, he was carrying a map of clandestine drop points in the Washington area, places where a spy could leave documents to be retrieved by a contact. One of those drops was the tree on the Maryland road he had visited earlier. A member of the Soviet embassy staff was seen nearby after Walker dropped off his "trash," but was not arrested because he made no attempt to recover the documents; at week's end he was recalled to the Soviet Union.

Walker had not been acting alone. Federal authorities say letters in his home indicated he was receiving documents from his son Michael, 22, an operations clerk aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier *Nimitz*. In March, young Walker wrote his father that he was accumulating a stash of classified material and noted, "Storing it is becoming a problem." In another letter, in April, the son referred to his problem once more, saying, "At the rate I'm going, I'll have over a hundred pounds of sovenirs

[sic]." Many of the documents in the Poolesville trash bag came from the *Nimitz*. When Michael Walker was arrested aboard the carrier in Haifa, Israel, last week, 15 lbs. of classified materials were reportedly discovered concealed in a box near his bunk. He was confined and charged with espionage. Like his father, he would face a maximum term of life imprisonment if convicted on the charges.

U.S. authorities said the spy ring in-



Accused Spy John Walker in 1983 with surveillance gear



Michael Walker as a high school senior, 1982
"There will be additional arrests."

volves other Americans. Said an FBI spokesman: "We expect there will be additional arrests in this matter." Agents have questioned John Walker's half brother, a Navy enlisted man, but no charges have been brought against him. Interviewed at the Baltimore city jail by a reporter for the Norfolk daily *Virginian-Pilot*, John Walker expressed concern that his arrest might cause trouble for his family and others, but demonstrated a curious bravado about his own fate. Said he: "I'm a celebrity."

Little is known about how Walker might have been recruited. Money appears to have been a motive. A former Navy communications man who served with Walker at Norfolk in the late '60s told TIME that Walker liked to live well even then. At one point during the period when Walker is now believed to have begun spying, the man recalled, Walker bought a 27-ft. sloop, no small feat on the salary of a young naval officer. Walker seems to have been enchanted by skulduggery; although a professional spy would not normally lug around incriminating evidence, Walker was caught carrying the map of drop sites, plus code pads, secret writing equipment and ciphers.

While the full extent of the security damage Walker caused may never be known, he had access over the years to some of the most sensitive information that the Navy possesses. After serving on two nuclear-missile-carrying submarines, the U.S.S. *Andrew Jackson* and the U.S.S. *Simon Bolivar*, from 1962 to 1967, Walker was posted to Norfolk from 1967 to 1969. There he was privy to communications codes for the entire U.S. Atlantic submarine fleet.

Even as the Walker scandal broke, another notorious spy case came to a close in a Los Angeles federal courtroom. Former Northrop Engineer Thomas Cavanaugh, 40, was sentenced last week to 99 years in prison for attempting to sell "stealth" aircraft technology to FBI agents posing as Soviet embassy personnel. His price for this vital information: a modest \$25,000.

Alarmed by the recent spate of cases in which Americans have supplied U.S. military secrets to the Soviets, the Senate on Friday added an amendment to the defense authorization bill. If enacted, the provision will mandate execution or life imprisonment without parole for anyone convicted of espionage for a Communist country. Said Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd, who introduced the amendment: "Those who would even contemplate such an outrage must know that their punishment will be certain and irrevocable." —By Janice Castro. Reported by Ross H. Munro/Washington